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Airports and Hearing Loop Technology

Hearing gate changes and other important announcements in a busy airport can be problematic even for those with good hearing and, for those with a hearing loss, it often becomes mission impossible.

Good audio communication is a basic requirement in the effective use of airport terminals by the traveling public and (particularly in the United States) that requirement is often overlooked by administrators and sound engineers who are not familiar with the limitations of hearing aids or the basics of hearing loss such as the speech to noise ratio, speech discrimination abilities and other factors peculiar to those with hearing loss.

Sympathetic airport administrations in many foreign airports (and a growing number in the United States) have turned to hearing loop technology to address the communication problem encountered by hard of hearing travelers in waiting areas, departure gates, ticket counters, information desks and other places where oral communication is required and that are a problem for a significant portion of the hard of hearing public.

Hearing loops, often part and parcel of these foreign terminal's public address system, are making air travel much easier for most hearing aid users - those who have telecoil technology in their hearing aids or cochlear implants. Hearing loops offer solutions going from one on one applications to systems encompassing huge public spaces all of which can create barrier free communication access to the hard of hearing traveler.

Airports throughout the world have been fitted with an impressive variety of hearing loop applications. Following are some examples where departure gates, airline check-in counters, passport control desks, security checkpoints and other places now run more smoothly thanks to hearing loop technology.

Sampling of Overseas Airports Known to be Using Loop Technology



Gatwick Airport - London: Induction loops are available where there are signs showing the “sympathetic ear” symbol such as waiting areas, check in counters and gates.

Heathrow Airport – London: Like Gatwick, there are induction loops available at various points throughout Heathrow.

Manchester – UK: Phased Array area coverage systems have been installed in key areas of the building.



Edinburgh Airport – Scotland: Counter loop systems are being used at Edinburgh Airport to provide equal access to information to those with hearing loss.

Charles De Gaulle Airport - Paris: Waiting areas within each of the terminals have been equipped with induction loops and the customer assistance terminal is fitted with an induction loop for the hearing-impaired.

Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport: The airport has installed induction loops in a variety of locations to improve accessibility for hearing-aid users and all are identified by the international symbol of hearing-aids in position “T” including at the information desks, car park offices and at the SAETA office.

Stockholm, Sweden: The Stockholm and all of Swedavia’s other nine airports have assistive listening technology (hearing loop systems) available at their information desks.

Copenhagen, Denmark: The waiting area in the transit hall has a magnetic induction loop.

Melbourne Airport, Australia: All gate areas in Pier G have been fitted with loops.

Brisbane International Airport, Australia: Old, poorly planned and badly installed loop systems were recently replaced by new induction loops.

Canberra Airport, Australia: Hearing loop technology was deemed essential and has been installed at gates, baggage claim belts, check in counters and elsewhere.

Christchurch Airport, New Zealand: Landside and departure gate waiting areas are served with phased array hearing loops.

Dublin Airport, Ireland: A series of induction loops were installed to facilitate the amplification of announcements for passengers with hearing difficulties.

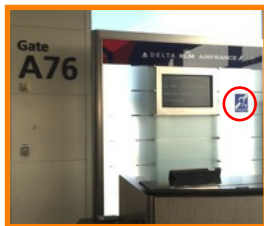
In the European Union, airports are tasked with delivering comprehensive services intended to address the needs of "persons with reduced mobility" (PRM). A PRM is someone whose mobility when using public transportation is reduced by a physical temporary or permanent sensory loss, by intellectual disability or impairment, or any other cause of disability, or age, and whose situation requires appropriate attention and adaptation to his or her particular needs of the service made available to all passengers.

In Europe, historically, airlines transporting travelers were themselves responsible for PRM management until the process changed in 2008. EU regulation 1107/2006 transferred responsibility from airlines to the airports themselves, meaning airports must now deliver PRM services which meet compliance targets and provide requisite quality of service to users. Under EU regulations member States are obliged to encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability.

Sampling of US Airports Known to be Using Loop Technology

Gerald Ford Airport – Grand Rapids, MI – the first in the U.S. to install loop technology throughout the terminal with all gates and the grand concourse looped.

Kalamazoo and Muskegon, MI – following the lead of Grand Rapids, these two airports have installed loops in a variety of places including individual devices at ticket counters, in-floor systems in the “meet and greet” hall, boarding and gate areas.



Detroit, MI – some Delta Airlines gates have been fitted with hearing loops.

South Bend, IN – all gates in a recent addition to the terminal have been looped.

Onslow, NC - the security areas and departure lounge are served by hearing loops.

Rochester, NY – Loop technology being tested/demonstrated at Delta Airlines gates.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN – the International Arrivals area has been looped and an “Art at the Airport” rest and waiting area looped.

Atlanta, GA, - Hearing loop installed at the information booth in concourse C.

Jackson, MS and Dallas/Ft/ Worth, TX - Proposals have been developed for these airports to adopt loop technology.

La Guardia, NYC - an effort is under way by HLAA looping advocates to get loops included in a planned upgrade at this airport.

Recommended resource: HEARING LOOP SYSTEMS in an AIRPORT ENVIRONMENT.

Presented at the Sixth Annual National Civil Rights Training Conference for Airports, August 11-12, 2015

http://aci-na.org/sites/default/files/grr_hearing_loop_presentation_08-12-2015_130pm.pdf

